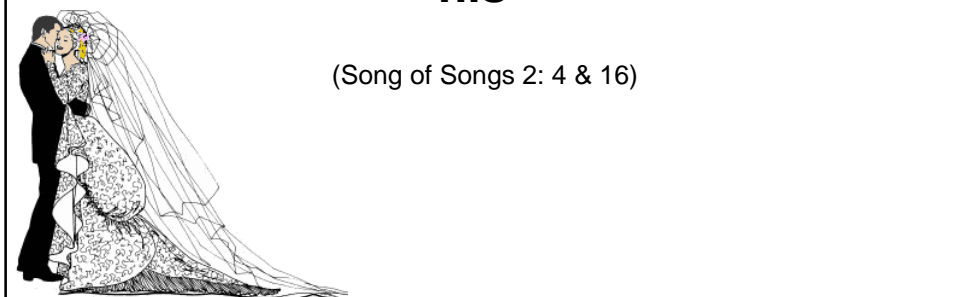


The Church... As A Bride

**“He has taken me to the banqueting
hall, and his banner over me is
love... my beloved is mine, and I am
his”**

(Song of Songs 2: 4 & 16)



Contents

The Bride In Ancient Israel

- The Selection Process
- The Bride Price & Her Gifts
- The Bride's Consent
- The Betrothal & Ketubah
- The Mikvah

The Bridegroom In Ancient Israel

- The Departure
- The Consecration
- The Bridegroom's Return
- The Huppah
- The Marriage Supper



The Bride *In Ancient Israel*



The Selection Process

- The Bride - chosen by the Father of the Bridegroom.
- Abraham sent his most trusted servant, Eliezar ("God's Helper") to find a wife for his son, Isaac (Genesis 24: 2-9).
- The New Covenant reminds us that:



"You did not choose me, but I chose and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit"

(John 15: 16).

The Bride Price and Her Gifts

- Bride was 'purchased' and her family was paid to compensate the loss of a worker.
- A considerable improvement over the pagan cultures surrounding Israel.
- God's way gave the Bride value and introduced sanctity and permanence into the relationship.



The Bride Price and Her Gifts

- We've been purchased at a very high price – the very blood of Jesus himself.
- We also receive gifts from our Bridegroom: e.g. the gift of eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.



The Bride's Consent

- Judaism teaches that marriage can only take place through mutual consent.
- If, as a prospective Bride, you don't like the whole deal, you can say 'no'.
- It's the same with us, God never forces anyone into relationship with His Son.



“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

(Romans 10: 9-10)

The Betrothal and Ketubah

- Betrothal = up to **12 months** before the marriage ceremony, but was a firm covenant.
- The covenant was final and completely legally binding.
- The only way out of this covenant was by a legal divorce (Hebrew 'gett').
- To cement the covenant, a legal document called a *ketubah* was given by the Bridegroom to the Bride.



This document outlined all that the Bridegroom offered and contractually committed to the Bride.

The Bride had to make **no legal commitment** to the Bridegroom at all.

The Betrothal and Ketubah



The Mikvah

- The Bride undergoes a ritual washing, symbolising the start of a new life

The Old	The New
Singleness	Marriage
Our Household	Father's Household



This is exactly where we get the Christian rite of Baptism.

The Bridegroom *In Ancient Israel*



The Departure of the Bridegroom

- Now the Bridegroom left the Bride to prepare a wedding chamber (*chadar*) and home for her.
- Wealthy households would leave a servant for the Bride
- He would remain with her to aid preparations until the Bridegroom returned.



“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also”

(John 14: 2-3)

The Departure of the Bridegroom



The Consecrated Bride

- The betrothed Bride was now called *kallah* ('the secluded one'), cf. Song of Songs 4:12

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

- She was to have **‘Dove’s Eyes’** (Song of Songs 1:15)

Doves have no peripheral vision and mate for life, remaining faithful to one partner.



The Consecrated Bride

The first couple of months may be easy, but...

... what if time draws on?



The Consecrated Bride

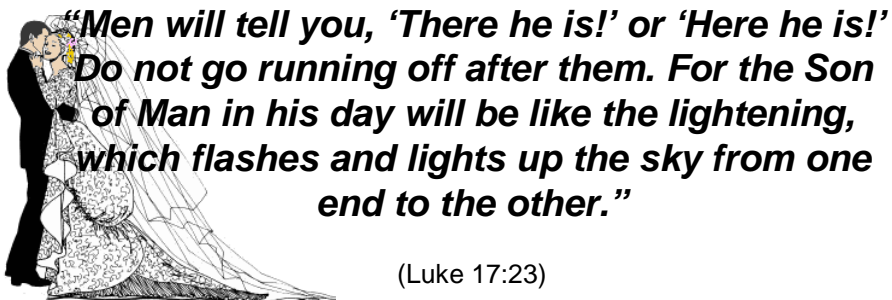
- How is our focus? Jesus is certainly taking a long time to return...
 - Can he be trusted?
 - Why hasn't he come yet?
 - Could he have met someone else?



The Consecrated Bride

“Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’”

(2 Peter 3:3)



“Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.”

(Luke 17:23)

The Return of the Bridegroom

- Neither the Bride nor the Bridegroom knew when the final wedding would happen – only the Father.
- Jewish Bridegrooms would go to their Bride at sun-down (the start of a new day in Jewish thought).

There would be a sounding of trumpets, music, dancing and a gathering procession on the way to get the Bride.



The Return of the Bridegroom

“But of that day and hour, no-one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”

(Mark 13:32)

“And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’”

(Matthew 25:6)



The Return of the Bridegroom

- The Parable of the Ten Virgins
 - Matthew 25: 1-13
 - **Both sets** of virgins were asleep whilst the Bridegroom was delayed.

Time for a 'reality check'?



A 'Reality' Check

Evangelical adults in a typical week:

- Regularly give money (94%)
- Attend church (80%)
- Regularly share their faith (61%)
- Regularly volunteer (48%)
- Do not know their 'spiritual gift' (46%)
- Read the Bible every week (40%)
- Always experience God's presence in worship (33%)
- Always prepare for worship (21%)



The Huppah

- *The Huppah* ('room' or 'canopy', like the *chadar*) represented God's covering in the marriage.
- Originally a special place prepared in the father's house for the newly-wed couple.
- The *Huppah* was open on its four sides to represent the Jewish home that should stand for openness, love and hospitality – especially to strangers.



The Huppah



The Huppah

“In my Father’s House are many mansions; if it were not so I would not have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you.”

(John 14: 2)



The Marriage Supper

- Everyone was invited to the *Seudat Mitzvah*.
- Music and dancing weren’t an option – it was considered a religious duty!
- The whole focus was celebration!



The Marriage Supper

“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Hallelujah!’

For the Lord God Almighty reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”

(Revelation 19: 6-9)



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